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News Releases

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New York immigration attorney charged for participating in international human smuggling ring

NEW YORK - Three alleged members of an international alien smuggling scheme were charged Tuesday with smuggling hundreds of aliens from China into the United States. The charges stem from an investigation conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

HSI agents arrested Hak Tung Lam, 44, of Flushing, N.Y., Wen Wo Lam, 43, of Staten Island, N.Y., and Ying Yang, 30, of Flushing, for allegedly participating in smuggling more than 450 aliens into the United States. Hak Tung Lam, an immigration attorney who practiced in Manhattan, Wen Wo Lam, and Ying Yang allegedly served as legal advisors to alien smugglers by recommending ports of entry, advising on methods of avoiding detection, filing false immigration documents, and obtaining the release of detained aliens through fraud.

"As an officer of the court, Hak Tung Lam swore to uphold the laws and constitution of the United States. Instead, he used his training and education to allegedly perpetrate one of the most wide-ranging criminal fraud schemes that this office has ever investigated solely for his personal financial gain," said James T. Hayes, Jr., special agent in charge of HSI in New York. "HSI will continue to pursue those individuals who seek to take advantage of this country's legal immigration system for their own benefit and at the expense of others."

"For Hak Tung Lam, zealous representation of his clients - a group of international alien smugglers - allegedly meant assisting them in breaking the law," said Preet Bharara, U.S. attorney, Southern District of New York. "He and his co-defendants were allegedly responsible for facilitating a smuggling operation that brought hundreds of illegal aliens into this country and for preserving their phony legal status once they arrived. The profits were big, but the price they will now pay, if convicted, is much higher."

According to court documents, from October 2006 to February 2009, Hak Tung Lam worked with others to smuggle approximately 468 Chinese nationals into the United States. During that time, Lam provided legal and logistical advice to alien smugglers and made false immigration filings on behalf of the smuggled aliens. He earned close to \$1 million for his participation in this smuggling ring. Earlier this summer, Lam was caught in an HSI undercover operation, providing advice and making false filings for an individual working for HSI whom Lam believed was in the business of alien smuggling. Wen Wo Lam and Ying Yang assisted Lam by, among other things, providing advice, collecting money, and coaching the aliens on what lies to include in their immigration filings.

Hak Tung Lam, Wen Wo Lam, and Ying Yang, are each charged with one count of conspiracy to commit alien smuggling. Hak Tung Lam is also charged with one count of alien smuggling. On the conspiracy count, each defendant faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison. On the substantive count, Hak Tung Lam faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison.

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

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